

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jim Costa (CA-20) called today (Tuesday, Nov.15) for greater Congressional oversight of decisions made by Amtrak Board of Directors.

In testimony before the Railroads Subcommittee of the House Transportation Committee, Costa said, "In reality the Administration wants to emasculate and then kill Amtrak, putting another unfunded mandate on the back of any state that decides to continue an inter-city rail system."

He added, "A 21st Century transportation systems needs rail service to be effective, but this Administration has a vision of transportation that is locked in the 19th Century."

Costa's testimony was made at hearing called to examine the firing last week of Amtrak president David Gunn.

Three of the five best traveled Amtrak routes are in California, Costa pointed out. The Pacific Surfliner, serving the Southern California coast is the second most traveled route in Amtrak's system; the Capitols, which run from San Jose to Sacramento is number three, and the San Joaquin's, running from Bakersfield to Sacramento, rank number five.

The Valley lawmaker criticized the Amtrak board's secret meetings and lack of published minutes, as well as the very makeup of the Board itself. He noted that two of the four Board members were recess appointments and the Board has not had its complete compliment of seven members for three years.

Costa has been a long time advocate for building up the passenger train system in California. His efforts have led to an increase in the number of daily Amtrak trains running throughout the state, along with the refurbishment of passenger terminals in the San Joaquin Valley. He is also the author of the High Speed Rail construction bond measure scheduled for a vote in November 2006.

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